



MACEDONIA (TIER 1)

Macedonia is a country of transit and destination for women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, notably Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria. Some foreign victims are trafficked through Macedonia to Albania, Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo) and Western Europe. Some internal trafficking was discovered, as were cases of Macedonian women trafficked regionally and to Western Europe for sexual exploitation.

The Government of Macedonia fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. While the government passed new anti-trafficking legislation and increased convictions, institutional deficiencies in the judiciary hindered greater progress in combating trafficking. Weaknesses were evidenced through the case of trafficking kingpin Dilaver Bojku's initial light sentencing and subsequent escape from prison in June 2003, before his capture and retrial. The government should institute more effective protections for judges and prosecutors trying trafficking cases and expand prevention programs for vulnerable groups.

Prosecution

While instances of official impropriety and corruption continued to degrade judicial effectiveness, several major trafficking trials during the reporting period resulted in sentences commensurate with grave crimes, and all convictions appealed to the Supreme Court were upheld. The Criminal Code adequately criminalizes severe forms of trafficking in persons and provides for sentences of four to 15 years. During the reporting period, courts handed down 19 convictions with sentences ranging from three to 12 years. The government retried Dilaver Bojku, whose original sentencing was inadequate and evidence of possible pressure on the judiciary. Trafficking-related corruption remains a problem. The government successfully convicted several former government officials and police officers on corruption charges and one police inspector for selling information about a planned trafficking raid.

Protection

The government continued operating the Transit Shelter Center for trafficked persons. The IOM and a local NGO implemented support, medical and other services for victims in the Center. In 2003, the government and IOM formalized victim assistance at the Center by agreeing on Standard Operating Procedures defining the roles of police and NGOs and codifying victims rights. The government assisted 143 foreign victims at the Center, 14 of whom were under 18 years of age. Under new legislation enacted during the reporting period, victims may receive temporary residency status. Macedonia does not have a witness protection law, but the government and IOM provided some protection for victims willing to testify. Victims may file for civil compensation.

Prevention

The government did not develop a central strategy for prevention, opting instead to support NGO activities. The National Commission for Combating Trafficking was not fully active and the national action plan lacked timelines for action. The government participated in some NGO police trainings and instituted a training program for consular officers to identify trafficking victims. The government developed new training manuals for police, investigative judges and prosecutors. The government continued its participation in an NGO-funded outreach program targeting youth, Roma, and other vulnerable groups.